Men-at-Arms

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Dedication

To my family

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Artist's Note

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CHINESE WARLORD ARMIES 1911–30

INTRODUCTION

A Chinese saying, 'the Three Mores', succinctly sums up the Warlord Period between 1911 and 1930: 'More Officers than Soldiers, More Soldiers than Guns, and More Bandits than People'.

The Sino–Japanese War of 1894–95 and the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 were humiliating defeats for the decaying power of Imperial China. Both conflicts exposed the country's archaic military structure, and they led to long-overdue reforms in training and organization. Modernized, Western-type armies were set up from 1900, and these 'new' armies were largely behind the overthrow of the decadent imperial Ch'ing (Manchu) Dynasty in 1911.

Li Yuan-hung (1864–1928) was one of the power-brokers during the Warlord Period, becoming President of the Republic twice, in 1916–17 and 1922–23. In fact Li was only a figurehead; with no army to back him, he was ousted at the end of his second term. Here he poses in a full general's light blue full-dress uniform with gold-braided collar, epaulettes and aiguillettes, and an egret-feather plume on his highly decorated képi.

The breakdown of central government control soon after the declaration of the Chinese Republic in 1912 led to a period of chaos and confusion, commonly referred to as the 'Warlord Period'. China fell apart into a series of fiefdoms ruled over by the local military governors or *tuchans*. These generals controlled their provinces or parts of provinces like medieval hereditary rulers, using their personal armies to maintain and extend their power. As the warlords fought to retain control over their territories a series of wars broke out, of varying magnitude, and sometimes involving alliances or 'cliques' of neighbouring regional leaders. It is estimated that between 1912 and 1933 there were 700 separate conflicts in China (with a staggering 500 in the remote and troublesome province of Szechwan alone).

Some of these struggles were too minor and local to feature even in the Chinese press, with a few thousand or even hundreds of men on each side. However, the major conflicts that raged during the 1920s involved hundreds of thousands of men in each army, and the antagonists in these larger civil wars had navies, air forces, and all the paraphernalia of modern warfare that the warlords could afford. The number of armed men in China grew rapidly during the Warlord Period, from about 500,000 in 1916 to 700,000 a year later. By 1922, when the major wars began, there were 1.2 million men under arms in the various

armies, and by 1925 this figure had risen to 1.4 million. As the fighting between the Nationalists and the Northern Warlords began in earnest in 1926 this figure had risen to 1.6 million, and it reached more than 2 million by the end of those campaigns in 1928.

However, the numbers of troops available 'on paper' were largely irrelevant, since only a small proportion of them were reliable front-line soldiers. For instance, in 1924 the Chihli Clique had a total of 480,000 men under arms in the various provinces under its control. Out of these, only about 380,000 had any real loyalty to the Chihli leadership, and only 130,000 of that total could be counted as reliable combat troops. Since at least World War II we have been accustomed to this kind of imbalance between soldiers in the combat arms of an army and the larger numbers required to man their necessary rear-echelon service organizations. In Warlord China such organizations did not exist, so the Chihli army's remaining 350,000 soldiers were left idle.

Warlord soldiers left to their own devices were bound to loot and rape in the countryside, or at best to demand goods in return for the worthless notes issued by their commanders. They were seen by the civilian population as the lowest form of life, and were given the derogatory nickname of 'bad iron', implying that nothing

Main warlord armies and cliques

Anhwei Army Army of the Anhwei Clique, 1916–20; leaders Tuan Ch'i-jui, Hsu Shu-cheng; controlled central and eastern China

Ankuochun United Northern Warlords Army, 1926–28; leaders Chang Tso-lin, Sun Ch'uan-fang and Chang T'sung-chang; controlled northern China

Chihli Army Army of the Chihli Clique, 1916–27; main leader Wu Pei-fu, 'the Scholar Warlord'; controlled central China

Fengtien Army Army of the Fengtien Clique, 1916–28; leader Chang Tso-lin, 'the Manchurian Warlord'; controlled central and northern China

Kuominchun National People's Army, 1924–28; leader Feng Yu-hsiang, 'the Christian Warlord'

National Revolutionary Army Kuomintang Party army, 1924–30; leader Chiang Kai-shek

good could be made from the 'material' represented by the average warlord soldier. Many soldiers were in any case ex-bandits, who were recruited en masse by warlords looking for an easy way to expand their armies. For the same reason soldiers of defeated armies were usually given the opportunity to join those of the victors. This led to the dilution of even a good army with troops who had already been defeated in battle and had no real loyalty to their new employer. The value put on these recruits by their new generals was pretty low, and this was reflected in the payments given to the new men's former commander: he was not paid per man for the troops he brought into the new army, but simply according to the number of rifles he brought with him.

Two soldiers of the early Republican Army in 1912 pose menacingly with their large swords, ready to execute any trouble-makers. The long handle on the executioner's sword gave a firm two-handed grip that allowed him to behead his victim with one smooth stroke. These soldiers appear to belong to a cavalry unit, as both have high leather boots and are armed with pistols.

CHRONOLOGY

1894
Sun Yat-sen establishes the Kuomintang Party, which calls for the overthrow of the Empire and the formation of a republic.

1894–1911
China's defeats in the Sino–Japanese War (1894–95) and the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion (1900) bring anti-Imperialist revolutionaries to the fore. Efforts are made to modernize the Chinese Imperial military system by sending officers abroad for training, and bringing in foreign advisors. Consequently, many Imperial Army officers are exposed to foreign influences, and some develop republican sympathies.

1911
October–December The 'Wuchang Uprising' or 1911 Revolution is not strongly resisted by the Imperial Army under Yuan Shi-kai. Military support for a republican solution to China's problems leads to the abdication of the boy-emperor Pu Yi, and Sun Yat-sen is proclaimed as China's first president.

1912
January Proclamation of the Chinese Republic.
February Sun Yat-sen fails to provide strong government, and is obliged to give up office to the ex-Imperial military strongman Yuan Shi-kai, who becomes China's second president.

1913
July Failure of 'Second Revolution' against Yuan Shi-kai's autocratic rule.

1913: a Republican Army cavalry trooper relaxes in camp, wearing a white fatigue uniform with puttees and ankle boots. His peaked (visored) cap, with a white cotton cover on the crown, displays on the band the five-point, five-coloured enamelled star worn by all military factions in China. Here he appears to be armed only with his ex-Imperial Army cavalry sabre, but the leather pouches on his belt suggest that he also has a carbine.

1915

October Yuan Shi-kai announces intention to form new imperial dynasty and to become China's new emperor.

1916

January Rebellions against Yuan Shi-kai break out over large areas of China.

June Death of Yuan Shi-kai begins the period of so-called 'High Warlordism', during which a succession of Republican national governments in Peking (Beijing) are largely ignored by *tuchan* provincial governors. During the next 12 years these warlords will fight among themselves for control of China, forming alliances and breaking them, as each general plots and manoeuvres in his attempts to take over as much of the country as possible.

1916–20: Anhwei Clique Domination

After Yuan Shi-kai's death most of China is controlled by a pro-Japanese political group, the Anfu Club, and its military wing, the largely Japanese-trained and -armed Anhwei Army.

1917

1–12 July Attempted restoration of the monarchy by an ultra-traditional warlord, Chang Hsun, who takes over Peking with only 5,000 men (sporting the traditional Manchu pigtail hairstyle). Republican troops soon evict them; the *c.*100 casualties are mainly civilians.

1920

10–12 June Anhwei–Chihli War; this short-lived conflict results in the total defeat of the Anhwei faction, whose forces are quickly routed by Wu Pei-fu's more resolute troops. The Anhwei military leadership seeks refuge in the foreign concessions of the city of Tientsin; but Anhwei adherents are still in control of two provinces of the eight they controlled before the war.

1920–24: Chihli Clique Domination

The victory of the Chihli Clique over the previously dominant Anhwei Clique in 1920, and over the Fengtien Clique in 1922, gives Wu Pei-fu four years of power and control of the Peking government.

1922

First Chihli–Fengtien War Although the two armies are fairly evenly matched the Fengtien forces have a numerical advantage; the Chihli Army has 100,000 men, 100 field guns and 100 machine guns, and the Fengtien forces 120,000 men, 150 field guns and 200 machine guns.

May Wu Pei-fu defeats the Fengtien Army and captures enough arms and ammunition to supply his army for a year.

July After the Fengtien Army retreats into its north-eastern strongholds its leader Chang Tso-lin proclaims Manchurian independence; however, he then begins major reorganization and retraining of his forces in preparation for a renewal of the conflict with the Chihli Clique.

1927: this photograph supposedly shows a warlord unit deployed and awaiting the order to attack. Two French Hotchkiss M1914 machine guns are visible, and the infantry are armed with Japanese Arisaka rifles. In this case only the kneeling officers in the middle distance appear, under magnification, to be wearing two-coloured armbands or large identification patches, showing a light over a darker colour.
The photo shows about 50–60 soldiers. Officially, the Republican and Nationalist armies were organized with 14 men to a squad, three squads to a 42-man platoon, and three platoons to a 126-man company; four companies made up a 504-strong battalion, three battalions a regiment of 1,512, and two regiments a brigade of 3,024 all ranks. In practice, of course, the strengths of units and sub-units varied enormously.

1923
October Soviet military mission arrives in Canton to advise Kuomintang Party on forming army. This will lead to several years of uneasy peace between Kuomintang Nationalists and Chinese Communist guerrillas.

1924
May Formation of Whampoa Military Academy in Canton to train officers for the Kuomintang Party's National Revolutionary Army (NRA).
25 August Outbreak of Kiangsu–Chekiang War, between two provincial warlords over control of the city of Shanghai. Although this does not initially involve the major warlord cliques, it is used by Wu Pei-fu as a convenient pretext to re-open hostilities against Chang Tso-lin and his reorganized Fengtien Army.
October
Second Chihli–Fengtien War This large-scale conflict between Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army and Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army involves a total of *c.*450,000 men, and is the most costly to date, with a total of more than 30,000 military dead. Wu is initially confident of victory, even though Chang has the advantage in artillery and aircraft.
23 October Wu's best commander, Feng Yu-hsiang, betrays him, marching his army away from the front line and taking over Peking. This coup by Feng undermines the Chihli war effort and effectively ends Wu's hopes of victory. Wu retreats, leaving thousands of prisoners, all his heavy artillery and most of his machine guns on the battlefield.

1924–28: Fengtien Clique Domination
After the defeat of Wu Pei-fu, Chang Tso-lin and his Fengtien Clique armies control most of northern and central China until 1928. This

ABOVE LEFT **Honan front, September 1927: an officer of the Ankuochun uses a range-finder. He wears light grey summer uniform with officer's riding boots, and has a despatch case at his hip. Throughout the fighting against Chiang Kai-shek's NRA the Ankuochun forces of the Northern Warlords had a distinct advantage in artillery.**

ABOVE RIGHT **1927: a flatcar crowded with resigned-looking Northern Warlord soldiers escaping by rail from the advancing NRA. They are all wearing the standard peaked cap, and two or three of them have motoring goggles. Presumably their rifles are stacked where they can get to them; one man (immediately left of the telegraph pole) has a single stick grenade in a three-pocket canvas carrier.**

control is not uncontested, however; there are rebellions from within the Fengtien ranks, and conflict with Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun.

1925

12 March Death of Sun Yat-sen; he is succeeded at the head of the Kuomintang Party by the commander of the NRA, Chiang Kai-shek, based in Canton.

July & September NRA launches Eastern Expeditions to clear flank in preparation for Sun Yat-sen's long-planned Northern Expedition.

December Start of conflict between Fengtien and Kuominchun cliques.

1926

May Fengtien forces defeat the Kuominchun.

1 July Chang Kai-shek launches NRA Northern Expedition from Canton, with the goal of marching *c.*1,200 miles to Peking and destroying the Northern Warlords. This makes steady progress.

October NRA force Wu Pei-fu and his remaining troops out of Hupeh province of central China.

2 December Under the threat of the NRA's advance, the Northern Warlords form the Ankuochun or 'Pacify the Country Army', uniting the powerful forces of Chang Tso-lin, Sun Ch'uan-fang and Chang T'sung-chang. This alliance is dominated by the Fengtien Clique and commanded by Chang Tso-lin, with the other two generals as joint

Nationalist officers of the victorious NRA, wearing various shades of khaki uniform, cheer their success at a parade in 1929. They would have little time to enjoy their victory over the Ankuochun; revolts against Kuomintang rule continued into 1930, and it is unlikely that many of these young officers would survive the war with the invading Japanese Imperial Army that lasted from 1931 until 1945.

vice-commanders. Chang Tso-lin offers Wu Pei-fu material help if he will recognize Chang's leadership. Wu declines this conditional offer of arms and equipment, virtually sealing his army's fate.

1927

Spring The NRA's successes attract opportunist warlords to join the winning side, swelling its strength to *c.*700,000 men. Chiang Kai-shek's forces are joined by Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun, the well-trained armies of the Kwangsi warlords, and that of the Shansi warlord Yen Hsi-shan. Although the opposing Ankuochun forces are formidable their leaders are not truly united, and only bring their disparate armies together as a last resort.

March Fall of Nanking and Shanghai to the NRA. A massacre of Communist members of the Kuomintang in Shanghai then causes a split in the party, with left and right wings emerging.

August Sun Ch'uan-fang is defeated by the NRA in one of the largest battles of the Northern Expedition; he loses *c.*10,000 men, 30 field guns and 35,000 rifles.

Communist mutiny by NRA 24th Division commanded by Chu Te; its alliance thereafter with Mao Tse-tung's Communist guerrilla movement gives birth to Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, which will fight the NRA until the Japanese invasion of 1937.

9 November Fall of Nanchang to the NRA

1928

March Resumption of fighting after break for winter.

9 April Major NRA offensive launched against Chang Tso-lin's Ankuochun forces from three directions.

1 June Chang Tso-lin and his army evacuate Peking.

3 June Believed by his Japanese sponsors to have outlived his usefulness, the defeated Chang Tso-lin is assassinated by their agents who explode a bomb under his train.

29 December Manchuria and its Fengtien Army, under Chang Tso-lin's son, the 'Young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang, accept the Kuomintang government and join the NRA.

1928–30

The victory of the NRA over the Northern Warlords does not end the civil strife in China. Two rebellions by Feng Yu-hsiang – in 1929, and then again in 1930 with the aid of Yen Hsi-shan of Shansi – are eventually put down by the Nationalists. Chiang Kai-shek's NRA then turns to crush the Communist heartland of the 'Kwangsi Soviet', but encirclement attempts in October 1930 and April–July 1931 fail.

In September 1931 Manchurian territory is violated by the Imperial Japanese Army, effectively beginning the Sino–Japanese War that will last until 1945.

MAIN WARLORD ARMIES, 1916–30

The Anhwei Clique Army, 1916–20

Tuan Ch'i-jui's army benefited greatly from Japanese training and military supplies after 1916, when it was expected that his 'Chinese War Participation Army' would be sent to fight on the Western Front on the side of the Allies, but the Great War ended before they were called upon to fight. This free training and the supply of good weapons and equipment were to serve the Anhwei Clique Army well during the next few years, when it dominated central China until its defeat in the 1920 war against the Chihli Clique. Known as the 'National Stabilization Army' from 1920, in July of that year the Anhwei Army was made up of five divisions and four combined or 'mixed' brigades.

One of the most competent Anhwei generals was Hsu Shu-cheng or 'Little Hsu', commander of the Japanese-instructed 'North-West Frontier Guard' or 'Frontier Defence Army'. This formation was made up of the four mixed brigades, and was regarded by friend and foe alike as an elite force. Despite the fact that the Anhwei Army had spent the previous two years in intensive training, its performance against the Chihli Army in June 1920 did not live up to its reputation, and it was quickly defeated. Thereafter

1920: soldiers march down the unpaved main street of a Chinese town during the Anhwei–Chihli War. These troops have no distinguishing marks on their uniforms, and could belong to either faction. Their rifles are Japanese Arisakas, and they are equipped with brown leather belts and ammunition pouches from the same source. They are probably on the way to a parade, since both officers and men wear white cotton gloves. The officers' uniforms are a distinctly darker shade than those of the other ranks.

the soldiers of the Frontier Defence Army were readily incorporated into Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army; Chang also took the majority of the Anhwei Army's weapons and equipment, which were coveted by all the other warlords.

The Chihli Clique Army, 1920–27

One of the most respected warlord commanders was Wu Pei-fu, known by various titles including the 'Scholar Warlord' and the 'Jade Marshal'. He was unusual among his contemporaries in being a relatively well-read man, who would demonstrate his classical calligraphy for representatives of the world's press. Wu had built his powerful Chihli Army – named after the northern province where it originated – around his well-trained and loyal 3rd Division, which he had personally instructed, with an emphasis on drill and discipline. While some of his other divisions, such as the 14th and 24th, were also considered reliable, none of them measured up to the 3rd.

Like all warlord commanders, Wu Pei-Fu expanded his army by taking in soldiers and whole units from his defeated enemies. After his defeat of the Anhwei Clique in 1920, Wu's forces were expanded by eight divisions and three mixed brigades. After his defeat of Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army in 1922 he acquired another four divisions. By 1924, on the eve of the second conflict with Chang, the Chihli Army had grown to *c.*250,000 men; but despite this 'paper' expansion the dilution of Wu's better formations with these less reliable elements was damaging. After his betrayal and defeat in the Second Chihli–Fengtien War, Wu eventually re-formed his army, but was never again a major player in warlord politics. His remaining forces, which were based in the Hunan and Hupeh provinces of central China, were defeated by the advancing NRA in 1927, after he had declined the overtures of his former enemy Chang Tso-lin.

Wu Pei-fu's army was mainly supplied through Italian agents, but he did not have the same level of connections or financial resources as Chang Tso-lin. He had been offered 20 advisors along with arms and ammunition by the Japanese in 1923, but had turned them down. One of his biggest arms deals was in 1919, when he bought 30,000 rifles, 24x 75mm field guns and 50 machine guns direct from Italy.

Wu Pei-fu, the 'Jade Marshal' or 'Scholar Warlord', was the dominant commander in the Chihli Clique throughout the early and mid-1920s. Wu was probably the best field general during the Warlord Period, but politically he was relatively naïve, and was betrayed on several occasions. He wears the usual officer's service uniform, with the three gold stars of a full general – *shang-chiang* – on his all-gold braid shoulder straps, and outwards-pointing collar patches also in gold braid.

The Kuominchun, 1924–27

Feng Yu-Hsiang, the larger-than-life 'Christian Warlord', first came to attention as one of the most competent commanders in Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army. The relationship between Feng and Wu was never easy, however, since the large size of Feng's command gave him too much independence for Wu's liking. In 1924, during the Second Chihli–Fengtien War, instead of marching his army to assist Wu Pei-fu against Chang Tso-lin, Feng betrayed him, leading his army into Peking and taking over the capital in a coup d'état. Feng then formed his

1923: some of Wu Pei-fu's Chihli troops practice precise foot drill. Wu was believed to be a little too preoccupied with the parade-ground, and could have spent more time giving his men more practical training. Not many Warlord Period soldiers were as well turned out as these men, who may well be from Wu's crack 3rd Division. All are armed with the Mauser M1888, a rifle in use by most Chinese armies of the 1920s.

troops into a new Kuominchun or 'People's Army'. Feng's alliance with Chang Tso-lin was short-lived, and in 1925 his Kuominchun eventually ended up at war with both Chang and Wu. In 1927, Feng – who then had about 100,000 troops – decided to throw in his lot with the National Revolutionary Army's Northern Expedition.

As his nickname suggested, Feng Yu-hsiang was a convert to the Baptist church in his youth, and he tried to impose his beliefs on his men. He attempted to instil the Christian moral code, issuing his troops with Bibles and insisting that they read the scriptures as part of their training. More practical instruction included the setting up of an artillery school with between 600 and 1,000 pupils. Soviet military instructors ran Feng's artillery, engineer, cavalry, intelligence and advanced infantry schools from 1925. At that time the Soviets supported the NRA, and as an inducement to ally his troops with Chiang Kai-shek's

A squad of Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun army read from the scriptures before going on parade. The 'Christian Warlord' insisted that his men try to live by the Ten Commandments (except, of course, for 'Thou shall not kill'). The fact that most Chinese were illiterate might account for the puzzled looks on some of the faces. All the men are well uniformed and equipped; the Nanking warlord also prided himself on trying to look after his soldiers' welfare.

army they supplied Feng with 15,000 rifles, 9,000 pistols and 30,000 hand grenades in the summer of 1925. The Kuominchun troops were generally better disciplined and trained than the average warlord soldiers, and Feng's 11th Infantry Division and some of his cavalry had a particularly good reputation.

The Fengtien Army, 1920–28

Chang Tso-lin, 'the Tiger of the North' and the most powerful warlord throughout the 1920s, has started his career as a common bandit, who then fought as a guerrilla leader for the Japanese during the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–05. Chang was sponsored by the Japanese from early in his rise to power, and this helped him in his progress towards domination of the Fengtien Clique. The Fengtien Army that Chang commanded by 1920 was either directly or indirectly involved in all the wars of the 1920s.

After his surprise defeat by Wu Pei-fu in the First Chihli–Fengtien War in 1922, Chang withdrew his remaining forces back into his Manchurian heartland. He then proclaimed the independence of the three provinces of Manchuria, and seemed to be withdrawing from the power-struggle in the rest of China. He soon made his real intentions clear, however, by totally reorganizing his army in preparation for the next showdown with Wu and the Chihli Army. He established a new GHQ for the Fengtien Army in July 1922, and centralized his disparate forces. His former five divisions were reorganized into 27 mixed brigades and five cavalry brigades, each brigade being made up of three regiments, each regiment of three battalions, and each battalion of three companies of roughly 150 men. Chang continued to receive money, weapons and advice from the Japanese. In an attempt to improve the standard of his officer corps in preparation for the coming re-match with Wu, in 1923 he made arrangements directly with the Japanese War Department to send 30 of the young graduates from his war college to Japan for extensive training in the technical branches.

ABOVE LEFT **A soldier of Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army proudly shows off his German-designed 9mm Bergmann MP18/I sub-machine gun; the 'Tiger of the North' imported these from Switzerland, and some would have found their way into other warlord armies. They would probably have been issued to 'dare to die' units, which fulfilled the same role in Chinese armies as the German *Sturmbataillone* in World War I.**

ABOVE RIGHT **General Chang Chih-chang, of Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun forces, was described at the time as the 'Flaming Evangelist of the Christian Army'. Feng and his officers exploited their conversion to Christianity to gain support for their cause from the West. General Chang wears typical officer's field uniform, and holds copies of the Testaments that he handed out to his men.**

The 'Young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang (left), heir of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin, poses with a fellow general; he was the old warlord's favourite son, and was given high command in the Fengtien Army at a young age. Both men are wearing typical senior officer's uniform, with gold braid around the cap band and general officers' ranking on their shoulder straps.

By the time of the Second Chihli–Fengtien War, Chang's army of about 200,000 men had large numbers of artillery pieces, some armoured vehicles and a substantial air force. After defeating Wu Pei-fu in 1924, Chang and his Fengtien armies dominated northern and central China for the next four years. His defeat by Chiang Kai-shek's National Revolutionary Army in 1928 led to his assassination by Japanese agents that June, while he was travelling back to his base in Manchuria by train. The Japanese judged that their client general had outlived his usefulness, and they hoped to step into the resultant power-vacuum in Manchuria and north-east China (as they would do in 1932, by creating their puppet state of Manchukuo).

OTHER WARLORDS

Chang T'sung-chang, 'the Dog-Meat General'

It would take a few lines just to list the many nicknames that this particularly brutal warlord earned during his rule over Shantung province in the north-east. One of the more amusing ones was 'Three Don't Knows' – it was said that 'He didn't know how much money he had in his treasure chests, how many concubines in his harem, or how many men in his army'. Chang was a ruthless commander whose army shared his reputation for brutality. By 1927, when he was in joint vice-command with Sun Ch'uan-fang of the Ankuochun armies to resist the NRA's advance, he had about 60,000 men. Chang T'sung-chang was known as the major employer of White Russian mercenaries, and he came to depend on them to win his victories.

Sun Ch'uan-fang, 'the Nanking Warlord'

One of the relative latecomers to the higher echelons of the warlords' unofficial hierarchy, Sun rose rapidly. In the spring of 1924 he had only two divisions under his command in Fukien province of eastern central China, but within a year he was regarded as one of the four most powerful 'super'-*tuchans* in China, expanding his grip northwards over the eastern provinces of Kiangsi, Chekiang, Anhwei and Kiangsu and earning the sobriquet 'Lord of the Five Provinces'. By the time of the 1927 fighting against the NRA's Northern Expedition his army had grown to between 40,000 and 70,000 men, in 11 divisions and six brigades. Until August 1927 he continued to resist the NRA advances stubbornly, with an army that was hastily put together with limited resources.

Yen His-shan, 'the Model Governor'

Yen, the *tuchan* of Shansi province in north-west China, was the great survivor of the Warlord Period, ruling over his province from 1911 until

his final defeat by the Communists in 1949. In warlord terms he was an independent-minded maverick, who survived by making alliances and accommodations with other powerful groups as and when necessary, but generally followed his own path. Yen joined in the Northern Expedition on the side of the NRA in 1926; although he was far from being a supporter of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalists, he was pragmatic enough to recognize that the momentum was building for the Kuomintang, so it was better to be on the winning side.

Yen's Shansi Army was recruited exclusively from his own province, and during the first decade of his rule he reduced its size to save money. By 1923, under threat from possible invaders, he decided to recruit a rural militia or Hsiang-Chun, which was to receive good military training to enable it to fight alongside a skeleton professional army. This 'part-time' solution to raising a military force gave him an army of 100,000 men when necessary, at a fraction of the cost of a standing regular army. Although his men were comparatively well disciplined and well behaved among the population, Yen's army suffered from a shortage of good-quality officers; most of the better Shansi-born officers chose to go to neighbouring provinces where they could earn better pay. Yen His-shan also had his own solution to the problem of acquiring weapons; he developed the arsenal in his capital, Taiyuan, to produce enough small arms, machine guns and artillery to supply all his army's needs.

In this photograph dated August 1917, two captains of an unidentified warlord army stand outside their barracks. Interestingly, their cap badges are in the shape of Maltese crosses; they vary slightly in size, suggesting that they are hand-made. The tunics appear to be of pre-1911 summer pattern, with the addition of the new post-1912 ranks on transverse shoulder straps. The right-hand officer has already received several campaign medals.

Minor warlords

It is not possible in a book of this size even to list all the significant warlords and their armies between 1911 and 1928, let alone the literally hundreds of minor warlords who ruled fiefs in China during this troubled period. Some of these petty warlords ruled in the outlying provinces away from the main arena of the campaigning armies.

Szechwan province in the south-west was well known for some particularly loathsome warlords, who milked the province for all they could get and inflicted great hardships on the peasantry. The nicknames that these warlords earned from the people groaning under their rule were eloquent, the best-known examples being 'Stubby Melon', 'Two-Headed Snake' and 'Rotten Pig'. (Distinctive nicknames could actually serve a practical purpose; Liu Hsiang, one of the most prominent of the Szechwan warlords, fought a campaign against two other generals both called Liu, both being his cousins.)

The Yunnan Army was the dominant force in the far south-west of China from 1911 until the early 1920s; it gained a reputation for good discipline and training, and its most prominent commander was T'ang Chi-yao. When T'ang was defeated in 1921 he astutely withdrew

1927: a young soldier of Sun Ch'uan-fang's army loads a 60mm mortar while his officer watches from a safe distance. The locally improvised soft cloth hat was particular to this army; the officer's may perhaps be the same type, but with the brim worn flat instead of folded up around the crown. On the front of the soldier's hat is a pale field sign or badge – apparently inverted chevrons? Other photos show soldiers with a similar device but in two colours, probably blue and red.

$500,000 from the state bank, and escaped into exile with a large bodyguard. After a warlord had managed to stash enough money to keep himself and his entourage in comfort he generally stayed aloof from further conflicts if he could.

Some warlords, and many civil officials of their regimes, went on to serve the Japanese during their occupation of much of northern and eastern China between 1937 and 1945.

The National Revolutionary Army, 1924–30

The armed force which supported the Kuomintang Party's existence in its south-eastern power-base in Canton was originally small and very poorly equipped. Despite the revolutionary pedigree of Sun Yat-sen, his Cantonese military forces were regarded in the early 1920s as just another warlord army, and – like most southern Chinese soldiers – had a poor military reputation. Their transformation began with the arrival of a Soviet military advisory mission in late 1923.

In 1924, Sun Yat-sen set up a new military instruction centre; this Whampoa Academy was to train and indoctrinate highly motivated cadets, who were later to lead the fight to defeat the Northern Warlords from 1926. By 1924 the newly named National Revolutionary Army was 100,000 strong but had only 65,000 rifles, 370 machine guns and 70 assorted artillery pieces. Small arms were in a bad state, since before the arrival of Soviet supplies most had been 'begged, borrowed or stolen'. Many soldiers were even armed with ancient matchlocks; it was estimated that 16 per cent of their small arms were obsolete and another 20 per cent totally useless, and Soviet advisors reported the shortfall in rifles to be at least 20,000. Nearly all of the NRA's artillery was of small calibres – 37mm, 47mm and 57mm, with only a few 75mm guns – and nearly all were obsolete even by Chinese standards. Shortages of weaponry were not exclusive to the NRA, but before 1926 they were particularly poorly equipped. The ratios of crew-served

weapons to manpower were only one field gun per 1,000 men and one machine gun per 250.

When the vital Soviet arms supplies began to arrive from 1924 they gradually enabled the NRA to prepare for its grandiose planned expedition to defeat the Northern Warlords. Between October 1924 and October 1926 the NRA received from the Soviet Union 157 field guns, 48 mountain guns, 128 mortars, 295 machine guns and no fewer than 74,000 rifles. They also received 24 aircraft, mostly of the R1M 5 type – a Soviet copy of the British de Havilland DH-9 two-seat biplane bomber that had proved successful in the last year of the Great War.

When the Northern Expedition was launched in 1926 the 100,000-strong NRA was made up of three armies – the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Route Armies – with the 1st made up of graduates from the Whampoa

A commanding officer and his entourage take the salute as their well-turned-out troops parade before going on campaign. The men have distinctive armbands on their left upper sleeves, halved in two colours, and under magnification a square of white cloth can be seen fastened to the top of the armband, probably carrying details of the men's unit. Although we cannot see the design of the flag clearly it has a plain field, with a narrow vertical white stripe in the hoist bearing black Chinese characters, which typically identified the commander and unit.

June 1926: National Revolutionary Army troops march off to war. Their headgear appears to be the baggy-crowned cotton cap worn by some NRA troops during the 1926–28 campaigns against the Northern Warlords. Under magnification, the men with slung rifles can be seen to carry big fighting swords on their backs along with their kit. On their left sleeves are two-coloured armbands, which may be in blue-white-blue, or simply blue over white.

Academy. Throughout the duration of the Northern Expedition the elite troops from the Whampoa Academy formed the vanguard, but their revolutionary zeal was not matched by some of the other components of the rapidly expanding NRA. General Chiang Kai-shek could not hope to defeat the large armies of the Northern Warlords with just a few thousand men, and he had to compromise constantly to expand his forces. The troops of allied warlords could not be expected to have the same dedication to the revolution as the core of the NRA, and heavy casualties amongst the Whampoa graduates in the early fighting in 1926 weakened the most reliable element. The NRA that emerged from the fighting to become the Chinese National(ist) Army after 1928 could never again really be described as a revolutionary army.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek takes the salute of his victorious NRA troops at the end of the Northern Expedition in 1928. Chiang wears the new type of khaki officer's uniform introduced into NRA service during the course of the 1926–28 campaigns. He sports none of the gaudy decorations of a typical warlord general, and his only insignia is the white sun Kuomintang cap badge.

FOREIGN ADVISORS & MERCENARIES

Many warlords employed foreign advisors to help them train their troops, with the largest contingents coming from Japan and Russia. The Japanese advisors were in most cases spying for their country while serving in the warlord armies. In their main region of interest, Chang Tso-lin had a number of high-ranking Japanese on his staff, including 11 of lieutenant-colonel rank as well as a specialist instructor and two liaison officers. In February 1927 a group of 15 British officers (presumably strongly anti-Communist) were reported to have offered their services to Chang free of charge.

In the mid-1920s Feng Yu-hsiang, the 'Christian Warlord', was in receipt of relatively large amounts of Soviet arms as the Russians tried to bribe him to back the Nationalists. These supplies were followed by a Soviet military training mission sent at Feng's request, although it never nearly reached the 200 personnel that he had initially asked for. The 36 to 50 advisors who did reach his HQ in the city of Kalgan north-west of Peking supervised the construction of several armoured trains and armoured cars. Feng also had a German and an Italian advisor, as well as a Japanese officer named Matsumuro Takayoshi.

China before and during the 1920s was full of colourful foreigners, and one of these was Morris Abraham 'Two-Gun' Cohen. Cohen had been a supporter of Sun Yat-sen in his homeland of Canada after a chance meeting with the Chinese revolutionary leader. In 1922 he travelled to China and joined Sun's entourage as a bodyguard, acquiring

his nickname from his habit of always carrying two revolvers. He had taught himself to shoot well with both his left and right hands when he had almost been killed in an ambush. On Sun's death in 1925, Cohen was granted a pension, and he stayed in China until captured by the Japanese in Hong Kong in 1941.

The most famous non-Russian advisor in Warlord China was undoubtedly Frank 'One-Armed' Sutton, an English adventurer who reportedly had lost his arm at Gallipoli in 1915. After 1918 he bought the licence for selling the Stokes mortar in the Far East, and in the early 1920s he hawked his adapted version around the capitals of various Chinese warlords. After working for a Szechwan warlord for several years (and barely escaping with his life), Sutton tried to sell his mortars to Wu Pei-fu. When Wu turned him down he ended up at the HQ of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin, who took a liking to Sutton; he put him in charge of the Mukden arsenal, which manufactured 400 mortars in its first year of production. Sutton also trained a few thousand men to use the mortars, and would claim that his weapons were largely responsible for Chang's victory in the Second Chihli–Fengtien War of 1924.

1924: defeated troops of Wu Pei-Fu's Chihli Army pass through a railway station on their journey away from the front. Some 700 White Russian mercenaries fought for the victorious Chang Tso-lin in this campaign, and the English adventurer 'One-Armed' Sutton boasted that the mortars he manufactured for the Manchurian warlord were a major factor in Chang's defeat of the Chihli Clique. These beaten soldiers are having to buy what little food they can afford from local traders, and may have to barter with items of uniform or other possessions. Note the wide variety of headgear – padded fur hats, peaked caps and knitted woollen 'bobble' hats.

White Russian mercenaries

Large numbers of émigré White Russians fought in China for several of the Northern Warlords during the 1920s. Many of these desperate men and their families had only narrowly escaped from the Russian Revolution and needed to find employment, and former Tsarist soldiers found themselves fighting for warlords in technical roles such as serving artillery or manning armoured trains. Chang T'sung-chang, 'the Dog-Meat General' of Shantung, was one of the most prominent employers of White Russians, with some 3,000 'White Guards' in his service under the command of the Menshikov brothers; the warlord trusted these mercenaries enough to have a personal bodyguard made up of tough Cossack veterans. Uncharacteristically, the brutal 'Dog-Meat General' decided to try to improve his soldiers' morale by recruiting a so-called 'regiment of nurses' made up entirely of White Russian women; these were employed to nurse his wounded soldiers, while at the same time training Chinese women to take over from them.

A so-called 'Foreign Legion' made up of three nationalities fought for Chang Tso-lin during the Second Chihli–Fengtien War of 1924, under the command of a White Russian general named Netchaieff. The Legion was made up of 700 White Russians, 300 Japanese and two companies of Chinese soldiers; it was divided into two units, with one large White Russian and Chinese element officered by Russians, and a smaller Japanese battalion with its own officers. Even the weaponry

LEFT

1927: a White Russian crewman of the Northern Warlords Army armoured train '*Shantung*'. He is wearing exactly the same uniform as his Chinese comrades, and, unlike White Russians serving in other armies, has no distinguishing insignia of nationality. (This train would later be captured by the NRA, and served in their 4th Armoured Train Battalion before being captured yet again by the Japanese in Manchuria in 1931.)

RIGHT

A young train guard wearing typical warlord soldier's uniform of dirty grey cotton jacket, trousers and puttees. Sewn to his left sleeve and hardly visible is a field sign that looks like a piece of coloured cloth. A Mauser M1896 automatic pistol is carried slung to his right hip inside its wooden holster-stock; note the multiple canvas clip pouches.

used by the Legion was segregated, with the Russians armed with ex-Russian Imperial Army rifles and machine guns and the Japanese having their own small arms. While the Japanese wing was short-lived, being disbanded in November 1924, the White Russians served on for several more years.

Three former Imperial Russian Army generals also worked for the 'Christian Warlord' Feng Yu-hsiang, two in the Kaifeng Mission and one at his headquarters at Kalgan.

ARMS & EQUIPMENT

Because most warlords acted like independent rulers of their provinces, they usually had to rely for their arms and munitions on their own resources. Unless they happened to be allied to the central government of the time, they had to either import weapons or produce them in their own arsenals. Weapons were shipped in from every corner of the world, and the usual unscrupulous arms-dealers and gun-runners flocked to China to ply their trade in this huge and wide-open marketplace which offered, at that time, commercial opportunities unique in the world. The disparate sources of the warlords' arms supplies meant that just about every type of pistol, rifle and machine gun available on the world arms market could be found in China during the 1910s and 1920s, thus hugely complicating the task of those who had to try to keep the various forces supplied with ammunition.

Pistols

Among the enormous variety of types that found their way into China during the Warlord Period, some models were particularly prominent. Older revolvers left over from Imperial Army service included the .44in Smith & Wesson Russian Model, which had been used by Chinese officers since 1878. Japanese revolvers of the 9mm Type 26 (1893) were also imported in some numbers. Semi-automatics included the Belgian 7.65mm FN M1900, M1910 and M1910/22; Chang Tso-lin bought German 9mm P08 Lugers amongst other models, and probably also received some Japanese 8mm Type 14 (1925) Nambu pistols. However, by far the most popular type in service in China during the period was the Mauser M1896 'broomhandle' pistol, of which huge numbers were imported from 1922 onwards and throughout the 1930s. These included both semi-automatic pistols, and *Schnellfeuer* selective-fire versions with a (wildly inaccurate) fully automatic capability; they were imported in both 7.63mm and 9mm calibre, both originals from the German manufacturer and cheaper Spanish-made copies by Astra. In 1927, 2,000 were imported from Germany by the 'Dog-Meat General' alone.

This soldier from one of Feng Yu-hsiang's 'big sword' units poses with his *da-dao* fighting sword – note the scabbard slung across his back - and with his Mauser M1896 pistol. The 'broomhandle' is clipped to its wooden holster-cum-stock, which converts it into a comfortable semi-automatic carbine (though still accurate only to about 40 yards), and he carries spare clips in a waist-bandolier of canvas pouches. These soldiers were regarded as elite troops, always at the forefront of an attack and ready to perform 'commando' missions.

Rifles

One of the most common rifles in service in China during the 1920s was the German 7.92mm Mauser M1888 in both rifle and carbine versions, which were acquired in large numbers after 1905. This weapon was also made in China at the Hanyang and Canton arsenals, the local version being popularly known as the 'Hanyang'.

The Russian 7.62mm Mosin-Nagant M1891 was in widespread use by several warlord armies, acquired from various sources. Feng Yu-hsiang got his directly from the Soviet Union, especially during 1925 when he was being wooed by the USSR. The National Revolutionary Army of Chiang Kai-shek got a large shipment in the same year, again directly from the Soviet Union.

Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army must have received some Mosin-Nagants from White Russian sources, but their main weapons numerically were Japanese Arisakas, since Chang's army was heavily sponsored by Japan. The 6.5mm Type 30 (1897) was the most common Arisaka in service, in both rifle

A squad of northern soldiers of Chang Tso-lin's army pose jovially but menacingly for the camera with their newly issued Bergmann sub-machine guns; note the long, five-pocket brown leather chest pouches for the box magazines that replaced the MP18's original 'snail' magazine after the Great War. Although mainly sponsored by the Japanese, the Manchurian warlord tried to equip his army with all the latest weaponry available on the international arms market.

and carbine forms, and was followed by smaller numbers of the 6.5mm Type 38 (1905). In the chaotic situation that reigned in China during the 1910s and 1920s, Feng Yu-hsiang also received Arisaka Type 30s and 38s from the Soviet Union – the remnants of stocks supplied by Japan to Imperial Russia during World War I. The older Japanese 11mm M1880 Murata was also listed as being in service with Chinese armies, and was probably to be found in the Fengtien Army. Another large-calibre 19th-century rifle, left over from the Chinese Imperial Army, was the 11mm Austro-Hungarian M1886 Mannlicher. By contrast, China also imported – perhaps via Greece? – the 6.5mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer M1903, an Austrian export rifle with an innovative rotating magazine design.

The Italian 6.5mm M1891 Mannlicher Carcano was also imported in both rifle and carbine versions; used by the Chihli Army, this may have been the model for 6.5mm Mauser-action rifles reportedly manufactured in four different Chinese arsenals (the Mannlicher Carcano was also occasionally called the 'Mauser Paravicino'). In the build-up to the decisive battles of 1927, Chang T'sung-chang desperately tried to arm his forces for the coming fight against the NRA; during that year he bought, amongst other shipments, 50,000 Czech-supplied rifles and more than 10,000 from Germany.

Machine guns

Before the 1911 revolution the Imperial Chinese Army had a number of machine guns in service, of the early Vickers-Maxim pattern. Initially Chinese Imperial officials were not too keen on buying machine guns, for a very practical reason. When the inventor Hiram Maxim had demonstrated his gun's capabilities to a Chinese delegation visiting London in the early 1900s, he was asked the cost of the ammunition to keep it firing for one minute; on being told it was £30 sterling the delegate quickly decided, 'That won't do for China – it's much too expensive'.

Just before the revolution the Imperial Army had purchased small numbers of the new .303in Vickers M1908. During the Warlord Period types acquired in significant numbers were the French 8mm Hotchkiss M1914 and the Russian 7.62mm Maxim M1910. Danish 7.92mm or 8mm Madsen light machine guns of M1908 and M1916 models were also shipped in, together with the so-called 'Rexer', which was a British license-built version of the Madsen. Japanese 6.5mm Type 3 medium machine guns were also used, and must have been among the arms supplied to Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army. Chang also bought arms

January 1926: a machine-gun crew of the Kuominchun train their weapon on the Italian Concession in Tientsin, watched by city police powerless to intervene against these interlopers. The gun is a Russian Maxim M1910, a widely used type that was supplied to Feng Yu-hsiang's army in 1925.

from the withdrawing Czech Legion, including ex-Imperial Russian Army M1910 Maxims.[1] Feng Yu-hsiang, the 'Christian Warlord', imported a wide variety of machine guns, of a different model in each arms shipment; for example, one such shipment included 27 American 6mm Colt M1895 'potato-diggers', while another had 50 French 8mm St Etienne M1907 guns, and yet another 90 Russian 7.62mm Maxims.

Sometimes Feng's arms shipments would include very small numbers of machine guns among the rifles, including one which only had three .303in Vickers M1908s and four .303in Lewis light machine guns. Wu Pei-fu, who got most of the weapons for his Chihli Army from Italy, acquired some 6.5mm Fiat/Revelli M1914 guns. In 1927, Chang T'sung-chang purchased 200 machine guns – of unknown make, but presumably 7.92mm MG08s – from Germany.

Altogether, it was estimated that by 1923 there were only a total of 1,394 machine guns in service with the various Chinese armies, but this low figure must have increased year on year as the warlords geared up for the decisive fighting of 1924–28. The shortage of machine guns in warlord armies may be explained by the fact that they cost on average $450 US, while a rifle cost only $17.

Mortars

Mortars were widely used by warlord armies during 1912–28. They were a relatively cheap and easily manufactured alternative to conventional artillery, light in weight, and easy to break down into their components for man-carrying – all great advantages in the conditions faced by such armies. They came in a wide variety of calibres, the smallest probably being 47mm and the largest 200mm, but the most popular was the 75mm based on the British 3in Stokes mortar. As already mentioned, Chang Tso-lin had his own mortar factory in Mukden where large-scale

[1] See Men-at-Arms 447: *The Czech Legion 1914–20*

The crew of a large-calibre mortar of the Ankuochun – the combined armies of the Northern Warlords – load their weapon during winter fighting against the advancing NRA. The loader wears a padded overcoat, and added to the top of his cap are cloth ear flaps, also apparently padded. Behind the mortar, the battery officer wears a fur hat and a fur-lined leather jacket.

production was supervised by the Englishman Frank Sutton.

Artillery

No matter how small his territory or his private army, every Chinese *tuchan* wanted artillery. The most that many petty warlords could expect to have in their armouries were a handful of mountain guns and mortars; only the most powerful commanders and alliances had large artillery parks, and there were only a handful of heavier field guns in China during the Warlord Period. According to Japanese sources, in 1918 there were 1,480 small artillery pieces in the whole of China, and only 46 large-calibre guns.

Mountain guns could easily be pulled by one or two small horses or carried disassembled – sometimes on camels – and were also easier to manoeuvre on the battlefield. German 7.5cm mountain guns of various Krupp models including the M14 found their way to China, as did some Krupp-designed 7.5cm field guns, which had been widely license-built abroad, including in Italy and Japan. Chang Tso-lin had a number of French artillery pieces including M1896 75mm guns; his heavier ordnance included British 6in 26cwt howitzers and 104mm Austro-Hungarian M14 howitzers. Other types of artillery in service with various warlord armies included the British 18-pdr Mk IV, and the Austro-Hungarian 7.5cm M12 field and M14 mountain guns.

Armoured vehicles

Given China's lack of good roads, wheeled armoured vehicles did not have a great impact on the fighting, although a few warlords did acquire armoured cars, and also some tanks. According to an English military observer named Impey who was in China in 1925, Chang Tso-lin had a number of Renault FT-17 light tanks and even Schneider heavy tanks; there is photographic evidence for the former serving with the Manchurian Army, but not the latter. (Chang also had his own special armoured limousine, built at a cost of $35,000 in the USA. This was armed with a Browning M1917 machine gun in a side mounting, and had special running boards to carry his personal bodyguards, who were strapped precariously to the sides.)

Improvised armoured cars were built in rail yards and workshops; based on truck chassis, they were fitted with plate armour and armed with machine guns and sometimes with light cannon. The 'Shanghai Warlord', Lu Yung-hsiang, ordered a fleet of 20 armoured cars equipped with three machine guns each; they were reportedly so thickly armoured as to be resistant even to shellfire. Impey also reported seeing French Citroen-Kégresse half-track 37mm-gun armoured cars in service with Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army. These vehicles (presumably the type ordered in small numbers by the French Army as the M23) were

(continued on page 33)

WARLORD TROOPS, 1911–17
1: Republican colonel, Beiyang Army, 1913
2: Corporal, Yunnan Army, 1914
3: Private, Chang Hsun's 'Pigtail Army', 1917

WARLORD TROOPS, 1920-24
1: Stretcher-bearer, Chekiang Army, 1924
2: Cantonese soldier, Sun Yat-Sen's army, 1920
3: Standard-bearer, 'National Stabilization Army', Anhwei Clique, 1920
4: Private, Gen Hsiung K'o-wu's 1st Szechwan Army, 1923

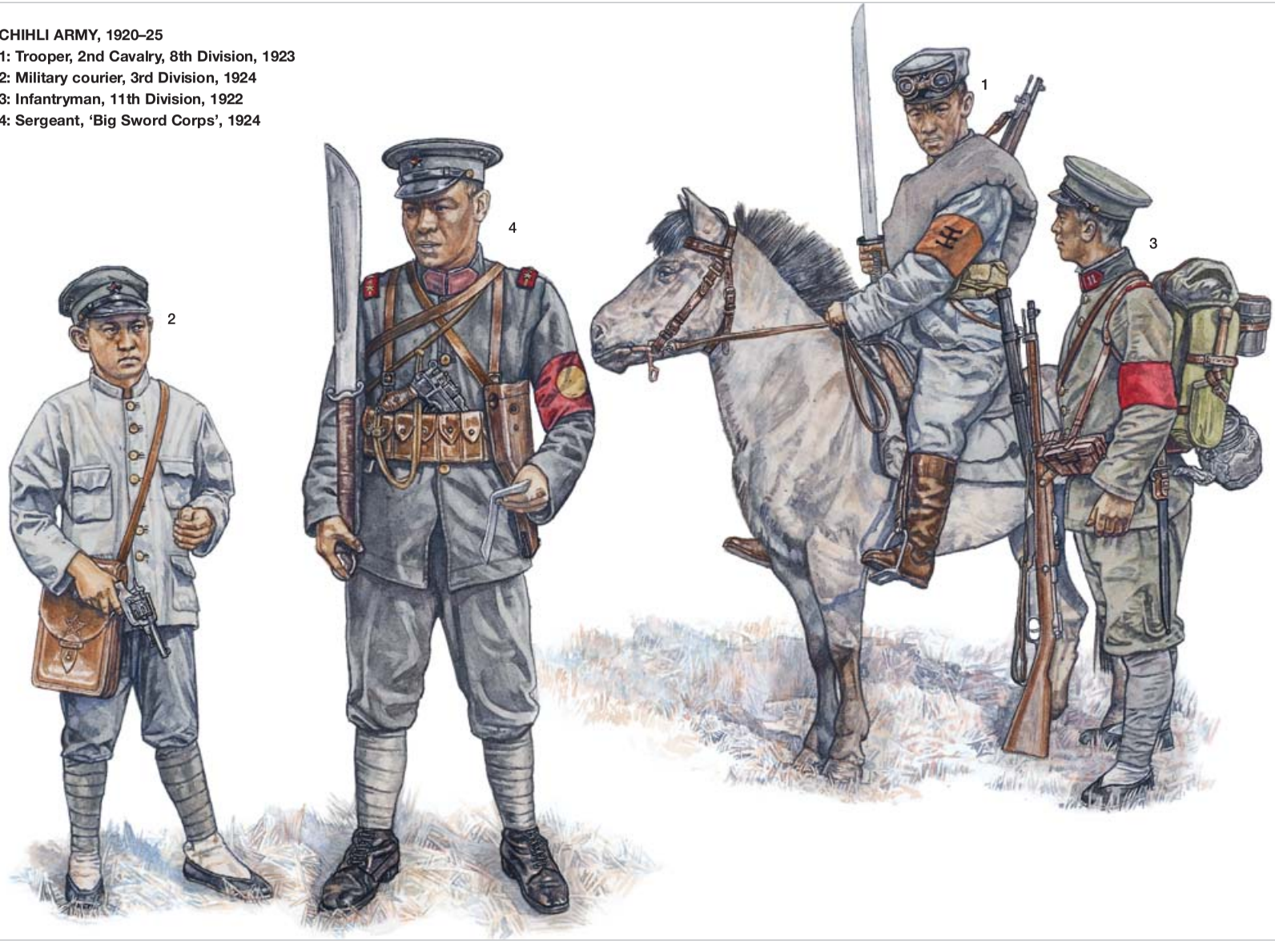
CHIHLI ARMY, 1920–25

1: Trooper, 2nd Cavalry, 8th Division, 1923

2: Military courier, 3rd Division, 1924

3: Infantryman, 11th Division, 1922

4: Sergeant, 'Big Sword Corps', 1924



KUOMINCHUN ARMY, 1924–28
1: Private of a 'big sword unit', 1924
2: General Feng Yu-hsiang, 1924
3: Infantryman, 1925

FENGTIEN ARMY, 1924–25
1: Infantryman, 4th Mixed Brigade, winter 1924
2: Japanese military advisor, 1924
3: Cavalryman, 1st Division, 1925

CHANG T'SUNG-CHANG'S ARMY, 1927
1: Bugler, Shantung provincial troops
2: White Russian cavalryman
3: Infantryman

ANKUOCHUN TROOPS, 1927

1: General Sun Ch'uan-fang

2: Lancer, Gen Sun Ch'uan-fang's Army

3: Boy soldier, Gen Sun Ch'uan-fang's Army, Kiangsu

NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ARMY, 1926–28
1: Major-General, 2nd Route Army, 1926
2: NCO standard-bearer, 1927
3: Infantryman 4th 'Ironsides' Corps

shipped to the front during the 1924 campaign, but for some reason did not see combat. Warlords were always wary about committing their best equipment to battle, since they were paranoid about these prestigious weapons falling into their rivals' hands. Wu also had turretless armoured cars built on truck chassis, which appear to have been armed with a single machine gun at the front. The NRA used a small number of improvised armoured cars during the latter stages of the Northern Expedition; these included several seen in Kwangtung province in 1927, with large domed turrets with 180-degree firing slits for a light machine gun.

Armoured trains

The huge distances and poor road network placed great importance on railway communications for all but local campaigns. For this reason armoured trains were considered a vital asset for warlord armies, and the first simple armoured flatcars were reported on the Peking–Hankow line in March 1920, presumably in the service of the Anhwei Clique. More elaborate versions saw action later, especially during the Northern Expedition campaigns, when both the NRA and the Northern Warlords employed them.

The latter acquired their first armoured trains from the defeated White Russian armies in Siberia after the fall of Vladivostok in 1922, and had others built locally under Russian supervision. Chang T'so-lin's Fengtien Army in Manchuria and the Shantung warlord Chang T'sung-chang were their most prolific users, and the latter crewed them with White Russians. His first was very basic, having only flatcars with sandbagged machine-gun positions for protection. The next three – named 'Yangtze River', 'Hupeh' and 'Great Wall' – were built at the Tsinan railway yard; these were based on much more formidable Russian patterns, having armoured wagons with rotating turrets mounting field guns, and were armed with six guns and 24 machine guns. These trains were used in battles with the Nanking warlord Sun Ch'uan-fang in the autumn of 1925. In early 1926 another four trains were built for Chang T'sung-chang, up-gunned with an additional field piece and two mortars. Used in the summer 1927 fighting against the NRA around Shanghai, they fared badly; two were destroyed, and the others limped back to their base.

Two replacement trains were built, this time in a Chihli railway factory, and these were part of a force of six Northern Warlord trains that went into action against the advancing NRA in 1928. The trains were regarded as the Ankuochun's most valuable weapons, and usually led their attacks, so the NRA managed to capture some of them; Chang T'sung-chang's 'Hupeh' changed hands more than once in 1927. When trains opposed one another, troops would be sent forward to tear up the tracks in front of and behind the enemy train, so trapping it on a few miles of track where it and its repair crews could be shelled at leisure. The armoured trains were considered to be so valuable in the fighting of 1927–28 that any train crews who were captured or were foolish enough to surrender were usually shot out of hand, and the trains' eventual capture or destruction by the NRA sealed the fate of the Ankuochun. By June 1930 the NRA could boast five battalions each with two or three armoured trains, and their then-allies of the

The German Krupp 7.5cm M1914 mountain gun was typical of the light artillery used by most warlord armies. Both these crewmen are quite smartly uniformed, and are wearing ammunition clip pouches for the Mauser M1896 pistol, which is presumably holstered on the left side of their belt equipment. Their peaked caps are of the northern style.

Manchurian Army could field another 12. (Tracing the employment and configurations of such trains is notoriously tricky; one, which started life with the Russian Imperial Army in 1916, would later serve the White Russians, the Czech Legion, the Northern Warlords, the Manchurian Army, and finally the Japanese in Manchuria.)

Chemical weapons

As the various factions cast about for new ways to defeat their enemies, a 'chemical arms race' in miniature developed among the major warlords. The first instance of the importing of chemical weapons was in fact by a minor Hunan warlord, who bought two small cases of 'gas-producing shells' in August 1921. Another warlord, Marshal Ts'ao K'un, approached a British-owned chemical company in the city of Tientsin in 1923; he offered cash if they would produce large bombs

Soldiers of Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun army stand next to an armoured train, wearing straw hats and various cotton uniforms. The young officer in the centre has a rank bar just above the identification patch above his left breast pocket. Confusingly, he can be seen under magnification to have four stars on this bar, which does not follow the Kuominchun regulations – under their system, company officers showed only one to three stars on a blue background.

filled with poison gas, but as far as is known they turned down his proposal. In 1925, Chang Tso-lin went so far as to have a chemical plant built in Mukden and hired German and Russian experts to produce chlorine, phosgene and mustard gas, and in the same year Feng Yu-hsiang also set up a 'special arsenal' to produce chemical weapons designed by his own Soviet and German experts. All of these efforts appear to have come to very little, however. There was one reported incident of Chang Tso-lin's aircraft dropping unspecified 'gas bombs' on the forces of his rival Wu Pei-fu; an indignant Wu branded the use of these bombs as inhumane, and there seems to have been no repetition of their use during the conflict.

Warlord air arms

The first Chinese national to qualify as a pilot was an officer named Tsi Yi-li, in England in October 1911; he was later chief instructor at the military flying school outside Peking. Before the break-up of China in 1911 the Imperial Government imported several German Taube scout-planes, and in that year the Revolutionaries bought two more. In 1913 the Republican government purchased 12 French Caudron GIIIs, and after 1918 some British Avro 504s were sold to China for training aircrew. In 1919, 35 British FE2b advanced trainers were sold to China, and these presumably ended up in several warlord air forces. The first recorded military use of aircraft in China took place in July 1917 during the attempted restoration of the emperor in Peking by the 'Pigtail Army', when a Republican aircraft dropped a few bombs on the Imperialist positions.

January 1927: for the camera, two officers of Chang T'sung-chang's army symbolically hand a bomb to the crew of a French Caudron C59 light bomber of the 'Dog-Meat General's' air force, about to fly a mission against the advancing NRA. The aircraft appears to still display its old French roundel; the several dozen Caudrons in Chang Tso-lin's air force carried different insignia. The aircraft pictured may have been acquired more recently and put into service hastily, as Chang T'sung-chang tried to bolster his by-then precarious position.

Aircraft would be used thereafter by most of the warlord armies, and in 1924 various *tuchans* had a total of about 170 planes. By the end of the major fighting in 1928 there were reported to be some 240 military aircraft flying in China – by then mostly for the NRA (see mention on page 17). Although most aircraft were concentrated in the hands of the three or four most dominant cliques, every tin-pot general wanted at least one in his armoury if possible, as a matter of prestige. Most bombing missions actually did little if any damage to troops on the ground, since the pilots flew too high.

The Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien air force was the largest during the 1920s, with about 100 aircraft including modern French Breguet 14 light bombers, flown by a mixture of Chinese and foreign pilots. Chang employed about 15 foreign pilots including 12 White Russians, but the very rudimentary training of his Chinese pilots did not include bombing practice or night flying, and they probably flew in secondary roles. However, by 1924 observers noted that only about one in five of the Fengtien aircraft was serviceable, and then only by dint of cannibalizing other planes. Wu Pei-fu's Chihli air force attempted to rival Chang Tso-lin's; he bought aircraft from the USA in 1923, and also had Italian machines including Ansaldo A30 light bombers. During the Second Chihli–Fengtien War in 1924 the press reported that Wu had four air squadrons at his disposal.

These Chihli soldiers of a 'big sword' unit wear a peculiar headgear which on close inspection reveals itself to be a combination of two types. Quite a number of Wu Pei-fu's soldiers were seen wearing black woollen 'pom-pon' or 'bobble' hats. In this case the standard cotton peaked cap is worn over the knitted hat, with the excess wool pulled up outside the cap. The unmilitary appearance is aggravated by the fact that the peaked cap is worn reversed, visor backwards.

The 'Christian Warlord' Feng Yu-hsiang set up an air corps in 1924; he had 12 Italian Ansaldo SVA-5 fighter-bombers as well as three Soviet-supplied R1 light bombers, which took part in the fighting of 1925. In 1927 Yen His-shan, the Shansi warlord or 'Model Governor', acquired two German Junkers transport planes, an F13 and an A35; these were flown by Japanese pilots who were hired to train Chinese crews. The attempt got off to an unpromising start when one of his aircraft crashed over his capital of Taiyuan, killing the Japanese pilot. Other warlord users of aircraft included Cao Kun, who bought ten aircraft from a French agent in Shanghai in 1922; and Ch'en Chiung-ming, the Kwangtung warlord, who employed three US pilots for a few months. The Chekiang warlord Lu Yung-hsiang reportedly had six Breguet 14s, two Morane-Saulnier monoplanes and two Morane-Saulnier 'Penguins'. Finally, in the desperate days of 1927–28 the threatened Shantung warlord Chang T'sung-chang asked a local German resident named Franz Oster to build an aircraft for his army. The plane was duly designed and built in the Tsingtao arsenal, and then shipped by train

to the 'Dog-Meat General's' HQ – where it was found to be too heavy to get off the ground.

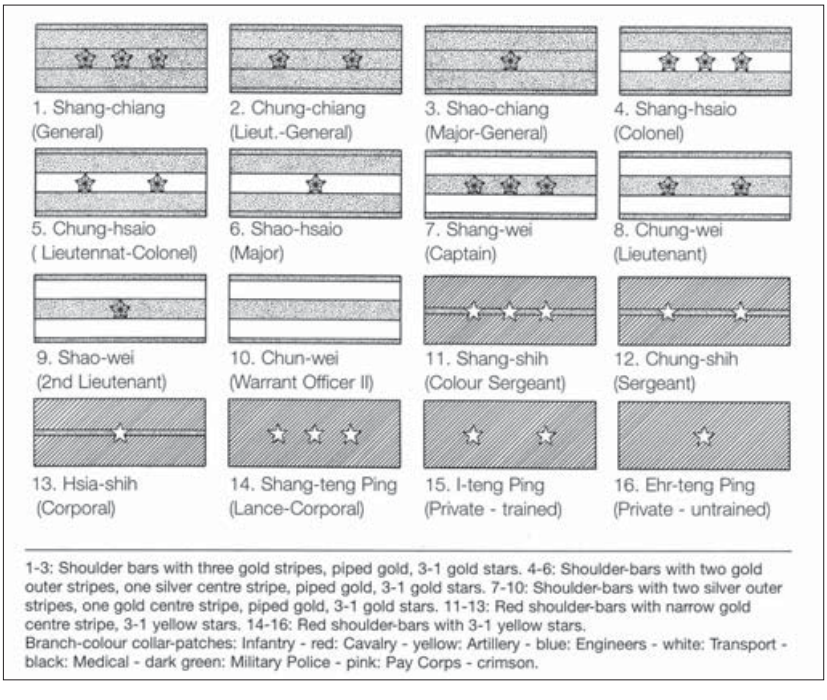
UNIFORMS

Warlord army uniforms

The standard uniform of most warlord soldiers throughout the 1911–28 period was a cheap cotton jacket and trousers worn with cloth puttees. In summer the jacket and trousers were made of light, often coarse grey cotton; in winter, if the soldier was lucky he would be issued with a padded version. Some soldiers, especially in the southern provinces, had light yellowish-khaki cotton uniforms. Both the grey and light khaki uniforms were made on a local basis, so the exact shades varied widely. While most grey uniforms were of light to medium shades, the colour in Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien and Ankuochun armies reminded one English eyewitness of German field-grey. Special items of winter clothing were mainly confined to the northern armies, with the more fortunate soldiers receiving fleece- or fur-lined coats, hats and boots.

Although the vast majority of uniforms were locally made from locally acquired material, one warlord did import uniform cloth from abroad. In 1922 Chang Tso-lin placed with a US firm a large order for $900,000-worth of material for his Manchurian army. In June 1923 he also ordered from a Danish supplier $250,000-worth of made-up uniforms, presumably for officers. In 1922, along with two of his subordinate commanders, Chang also invested $180,000 in setting up a local textile mill at Harbin in Manchuria to produce heavy woollen cloth for his army.

Ex-bandits enlisted into warlord armies had to be issued with whatever uniforms were available, and some would have fought in their



1-3: Shoulder bars with three gold stripes, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 4-6: Shoulder-bars with two gold outer stripes, one silver centre stripe, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 7-10: Shoulder-bars with two silver outer stripes, one gold centre stripe, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 11-13: Red shoulder-bars with narrow gold centre stripe, 3-1 yellow stars. 14-16: Red shoulder-bars with 3-1 yellow stars.
Branch-colour collar-patches: Infantry - red: Cavalry - yellow: Artillery - blue: Engineers - white: Transport - black: Medical - dark green: Military Police - pink: Pay Corps - crimson.

Rank insignia, Chinese Republican Army, 1912–29

These NRA soldiers resting at the end of a hard day's march are wearing uniforms typical of southern Chinese troops. They have grey cotton peaked caps with the white-on-blue KMT cap badge, cotton jackets and long shorts, worn with black stockings; their straw sandals are a cheap and easily-made alternative to boots. Their kit is carried in blanket rolls instead of knapsacks. The foreground soldier is bristling with ammunition pouches carrying five-round clips for the Mauser M1888 or Chinese Hanyang rifle.

own clothes. Even when new uniforms were handed out many bandits refused to discard their own garments; one eyewitness recalls seeing 'bandits decked out in new uniforms which they put on over their bandit rags, and with their army caps on top of their straw hats, which they refused to be parted from'.

Personal equipment was largely confined to a belt and a canvas bandolier to carry spare clips for rifles, and possibly a canvas holdall and bedroll. Few Chinese soldiers of the period were equipped to typical European standards; some units did have knapsacks, leather belts with ammunition pouches, and water bottles, but these were in the minority. Those that were in use were usually of Japanese patterns, in brown leather. Waterproof coats and tents were confined to only a handful of elites, and to provide any shelter from the rain and shade from the sun most soldiers had to rely on umbrellas that they purchased themselves. Certain picked 'shock' units might be equipped with the best kit on the market, including such exotic items as a number of armoured breastplates bought by Chang Tso-lin from a US firm in the summer of 1923.

Headgear

The grey-coloured cotton peaked (visored) caps worn by most warlord soldiers varied in design depending on the region of origin. In simple terms, soldiers from south and central China wore a larger-crowned cap with a bigger peak, while northern soldiers wore a more compact 'pork pie' pattern. Attempts were made to render the standard peaked cap more suitable for winter conditions by sewing cloth ear flaps inside the band, which could then be worn either down or tied over the top. The fur hats mainly worn in winter by troops in northern China came in a variety of shapes and sizes, but all of them had fur-lined ear flaps that could be worn either down or tied up on top. Although most fur hats did not carry

badges, the better-dressed units used the same five-pointed star badge as on the peaked cap (see 'Insignia', below).

Some of Feng Yu-hsiang's troops wore alternative headgear, with two types of cotton hat in service. One was basically a large flat item described at the time as a 'bathing cap', with a 4in brim; the other was a wide-brimmed 'Stetson'-type hat, in either cotton or straw, both materials being worn together. Other headgear worn by ordinary soldiers included woollen 'pom-pon' or 'bobble' hats; photographs suggest that these were widely worn by Wu Pei Fu's Chihli soldiers, and they may have been restricted to his army. Some armies definitely wore hats specific to their region; for instance, some troops of Sun Ch'uan-fang's army wore locally-made felt hats. These distinctive hats usually had the brim folded up around the back and sides of the crown, rather in a 'Hollywood Robin Hood' style (see photo on page 16).

Although steel helmets were very rarely seen in use by warlord troops, there is photographic evidence for their issue to one formation – the so-called 'Tin Hat Brigade' of Wu Pei-fu's 3rd Division, who wore Adrian M1915 helmets. Despite the lack of other pictorial evidence there are a few textual references to helmets. An arms shipment destined for Chang T'sung-chang's army in March 1928 included a number of helmets of unknown pattern; and according to press reports in 1927, during that year Chang Tso-lin received shipments from Norway that included steel helmets.

Insignia

Insignia on Chinese soldiers' uniforms of the 1911–30 period were largely confined to transverse rank straps (see chart, page 37) on the shoulders of the tunic, and the five-coloured star badge on the capband. With a few exceptions, the latter was generally displayed from *c.*1916 to 1928; the five points of the badge were usually enamelled in the colours of the national flag – from the top clockwise, red, black, white, blue and yellow. Some of the better-uniformed Republican and warlord units received collar patches in branch-of-service colours (see chart). The other main form of identification was coloured armbands worn on one of the tunic sleeves (see pages 41–42).

A machine-gun section of the so-called 'Tin Hat Brigade' of Wu Pei-fu's elite 3rd Division stand guarding their .30cal Browning M1917. This is the only unit for which there is photographic evidence of the issue of steel helmets. The source of their French-style Adrians is uncertain, but since the English observer Impey says that the helmets had their 'eagles hammered out', they presumably came from former Imperial Russian or Serbian army stocks.

Improvised insignia sometimes had to be used when the normal badges were not available. One instance was recorded when Chang T'sung-chang absorbed large numbers of the defeated Wu Pei-fu's troops into his army, and allowed them to keep their former ranks. So as not to upset his own officers he promoted all of the latter, but since the necessary extra rank stars for their shoulder straps were not immediately available he had his men make some from the silver and gold paper from cigarette packets (unsurprisingly, many of these did not even survive the promotion ceremony).

1927: Ankuochun soldiers search for 'Red' agitators as the National Revolutionary Army, at that date still supported by Communist guerrillas, approach their province. Note the officer's broad armband, which seems to be halved in two slightly contrasting colours. The Northern Warlords' fear of 'fifth columnists' was not unfounded, since their war effort was constantly undermined by strikes and riots. These soldiers are armed only with spears, but that would be no comfort to any suspect they arrested; the Northern Armies usually beheaded anyone they suspected of assisting the NRA, especially students.

National Revolutionary Army uniforms and insignia

From its beginnings in the early 1920s the Cantonese army of Sun Yat-sen had a very basic cotton uniform consisting of a long shirt, short trousers, and a cotton hat with a wide, floppy brim. Attempts were made to improve their appearance, and a new uniform was designed in 1922 (see Plate B2), but this would only have been available to a few elite units – since Sun Yat-sen's troops in Canton were fighting for their very survival against surrounding warlord armies, the niceties of uniforms would not have been a priority.

With the foundation of the Whampoa Academy in 1924 a serious attempt was made to smarten up the retitled National Revolutionary Army, which received a new cap badge of a white sunburst on a blue disc. This same Kuomintang party emblem was thereafter displayed on flags and armbands, and became the symbol of the Nationalist Army. According to eyewitnesses, despite the introduction of new uniforms from 1924 the NRA still did not look like a well-trained and efficient force when the Northern Expedition marched out in 1926. The men's uniforms were poorly made from the cheapest material, and few of them had been issued with proper footwear. One eyewitness described the troops he saw marching off to war as 'straw-sandaled little men … clad in ill fitting cotton uniforms in dirty grey or yellow'.

As the Northern Expedition progressed the look of the NRA improved significantly, with the regular units receiving better-quality grey cotton uniforms. These would have been made largely in the workshops established at the Whampoa Academy back in Canton. Other items of NRA uniform included a distinctive baggy-crowned cap, similar in shape to the type made famous by Chairman Mao after 1949. New and

A squad of soldiers from the province of Chekiang are seen patrolling the streets of a city during the mid-1920s. All wear similar rough grey cotton uniforms, and several canvas bandoliers. Pinned or sewn to the left sleeves of their jackets are small pieces of white cloth, which serve as identification in place of the more usual armbands. Their rifles are all Mauser M1888s or Chinese copies.

smarter khaki uniforms for officers created unforeseen problems when their distinctive colour made them easy targets for the Northern Army's marksmen, since they stood out from the blue or grey cotton clothing of the NRA rank and file. The NRA's Soviet advisors had their own field uniform when on operations, described as being 'smart and made from khaki garbardine cloth', and worn with British-type cork sun helmets.

Armbands and other field signs

Because most warlord soldiers wore the same nondescript grey cotton uniforms some form of field sign had to be worn during operations. The usual way that armies were distinguished from one another was by the wearing of pieces of coloured cloth or armbands wrapped around the upper arm. The colour and design of these armbands varied widely (see colour plates), and little detailed information is available. Some eyewitnesses noted the basic colours worn by a particular army at a particular time, but these often varied from campaign to campaign. Sometimes it was only necessary for one side to wear armbands, as was the case during the Kiangsu-Chekiang War of 1924; the Chekiang troops wore distinctive headgear in the form of a cotton cap which was described as similar in shape to a US baseball cap, while their Kiangsu adversaries wore red armbands.

Any colour of cloth might be used for the armbands, but blue and red seem to have been the most popular, with some use of green. (White would not normally be used as a field colour, since this is the Chinese colour of mourning.) In 1925 Feng Yu-hsiang's Kuominchun troops went on campaign wearing red armbands to distinguish them from their enemies, Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army; but a few years earlier Wu Pei-fu's

men had also adopted red armbands to distinguish them from their adversaries of that time, Chang Tso-lin's Fengtien Army. Many armbands had a white disc in the centre, usually stencilled in Chinese characters with the name of the wearer's commanding officer or of the army he fought for. When not even enough cloth for armbands was available, small square cloth patches were fixed to the sleeve in a distinguishing colour. Similar patches were also sometimes seen sewn to the top of an armband, presumably to designate a particular unit within an army.

Armbands were often fastened with safety pins, and at the time this was purported to be so that soldiers could change sides at short notice. Their commanders could quickly issue them with armbands in the colours of their new warlord employer, which he might even have had in store in anticipation of such an eventuality.

1927: a standard-bearer and escort of Chang T'sung-chang's army; like most flags of the Warlord Period, this one seems to be based on that of the 1911 Wuchang Uprising (see Plate B3). A black eight-point star can just be seen on the red field, with yellow discs at each tip of the rays, and others around the centre encircling a white disc bearing a character identifying the commander's name. Note the white panel down the hoist, with black characters identifying the unit, and the small national flag and streamers at the top of the staff. Blurred in the background, a slightly differing design of eight-point star flag can be made out.

Flags

Although the national flag of China during the period 1912–28 was five equal horizontal bars (from top: red, yellow, blue, white, black), this was seldom used as a military standard. Most warlord flags were based on that of the revolutionaries of the 1911 Wuchang Uprising (see Plate B3), possibly with the name of a commander in the centre. In a number of instances a small version of the five-barred national flag was flown above this, surmounted by coloured streamers (see photograph, left). Other unit flags had a plain field – usually in red – with the name of the commander written vertically down it in bold white or yellow Chinese characters. As with the earlier Imperial and later Nationalist and Communist armies, the warlords do not seem to have been particularly concerned with displaying unique symbols and insignia either on their uniforms or their flags. Some flags simply had a single Chinese character for the family name of the commanding officer, which could lead to confusion. During one battle two opposing commanders both with the family name 'Pai' flew similar flags; deceived by their adversaries' standard, the soldiers of the northern General Pai were overrun by NRA troops under the command of another General Pai.

PLATE COMMENTARIES

A: WARLORD TROOPS, 1911–17

A1: Republican colonel, Beiyang Army, 1913

This officer of the early Republican Army is wearing an ex-Imperial Army summer tunic introduced in 1908, with new insignia added. His khaki-green cotton jacket has had the old shoulder boards of rank removed and replaced by new transverse shoulder straps. His riding breeches and leather gaiters and boots are civilian items that he has purchased while waiting for a new Republican Army uniform to become available. On the front of his peaked cap he has a badge taken from the design of the Wuchang Uprising flag of 1911; this was only in service briefly before being replaced by the five-pointed star, at first in brass and then in five-coloured enamel. His sword is also retained from his previous Imperial Army service.

A2: Corporal, Yunnan Army, 1914

This NCO guarding a government building shows the distinctive red cap band of the Yunnan Army. The cap is an old Imperial summer pattern, with the new Republican brass five-star badge added; this would itself soon be superceded by the five-coloured version which became the almost universal insignia during the Warlord Period. During the early Republican period uniforms were often a mixture of the old Imperial and new uniforms, since the latter were introduced only slowly – especially in the outlying provinces. He is wearing a newly issued light grey padded cotton jacket, with a pair of trousers which are tucked into even lighter-coloured puttees, and new black shoes. On the shoulders he displays the newly introduced Republican ranking for *hsia-chih* – red straps with a gold centre-stripe and single brass star. He is armed with an 11mm Austro-Hungarian M1886 Mannlicher rifle, one of the models in service with the Imperial Army pre-1911.

A3: Private, General Chang Hsun's 'Pigtail Army', 1917

The comic-opera attempt by the monarchist Chang Hsun to restore the Emperor Pu Yi to power in Peking lasted just five days; this soldier is one of the 5,000 who briefly occupied the Forbidden City in July 1917 before being expelled by Republican troops. He is dressed in a typical grey cotton Republican Army uniform which has been adapted to show his commander's allegiance to the emperor. On his left sleeve he has a plain yellow armband (this could not, however, be true 'Imperial yellow', a shade that traditionally could only be worn by the emperor himself). He has been issued by his commander with an old pre-1911 Imperial Army enlisted ranks' cap badge. As the army's name suggests, the most conspicuous thing about Chang Hsun's men was that he insisted that they retain the Manchu pigtail; after their defeat they soon cut them off, and Peking's streets were strewn with these discarded symbols of pre-1911 China. The equipment worn is basic: two canvas bandoliers with ammunition clips for his Austrian 6.5mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer M1903 rifle.

A young artillery warrant officer, wearing a grey cotton Republican Army uniform in varying tones, stands in front of a train carrying guns to the front. Insignia on his tunic include pointed blue collar patches for the artillery branch; and note his right-hand rank strap hanging loose down the front of his shoulder, its silver-gold-silver stripes and lack of stars identifying him as a *chun-wei*. On his left sleeve an armband with Chinese characters identifies his formation or commanding officer. Holstered at his right hip is a 'broomhandle' Mauser, with some kind of long double tassel attached to its butt-ring.

B: WARLORD TROOPS, 1920–24

B1: Stretcher-bearer, Chekiang Army, 1924

Many campaigns of the period were fought not between the main regional 'cliques' but between individual generals on a local level. This stretcher-bearer was sketched among his comrades by a British reporter, R.W. Davis, during the Kiangsu–Chekiang War of 1924. He is wearing standard grey cotton uniform, with the addition of a red cross armband on the left sleeve; note also on his jacket green collar patches, the colour of the medical branch of the Republican Army during the 1920s. His peaked cap bears a badge featuring a red cross over a wreath. In an attempt to achieve recognition for his humanitarian role on the battlefield he is carrying a small red cross flag on a long bamboo pole. The stretcher-bearer's role was essentially futile, since any wounded soldiers he removed from the battlefield would be very lucky to receive even basic medical attention. The wounded were in most cases simply removed to the rear areas, where they were often left to die.

B2: Cantonese soldier, Sun Yat-Sen's army, 1920

The small armed force formed by Sun Yat-sen in Canton in the early 1920s was intended to develop into a party army that could eventually win power for the Kuomintang. This smart uniform worn by one of the best-equipped of Sun Yat-sen's units featured in photographs in the Western press in 1920, and combines both old and new elements. The cap badge is the usual five-point star in coloured enamels. His khaki cotton cap with a black band, and his light khaki cotton summer tunic, short trousers (or 'long shorts') and puttees, with leather boots, are intended to give him a 'new' look. Equipment and weaponry for this crack unit have been obtained from Japanese sources, with an Imperial Army backpack and an Arisaka Type 30 rifle. Sun Yat-sen's limited resources in his beleaguered enclave in the south prevented him from kitting out and arming more than a few hand-picked units to this standard.

B3: Standard-bearer, 'National Stabilization Army', Anhwei Clique, 1920

This was the name adopted by the former Frontier Defence Army – part of the Japanese-sponsored Anhwei Clique – for the 1920 war against Wu Pei-fu's Chihli Army. The standard-bearer is reasonably smartly turned out in the usual grey cotton uniform, with an armband displaying the characters for 'National Stabilization Army'. The standard is of the same basic design as the Wuchang flag flown by the revolutionaries who overthrew the Manchu Empire. After the revolution the eight-pointed star with gold discs at the points was adopted for several years as the symbol of the Chinese Army. When it was flown as a unit flag the commander's name would generally appear somewhere in the centre; in this case, that of the Frontier Defence Army's commander Hsu Shu-cheng is represented by the single Chinese character for 'Hsu' on the white disc.

B4: Private, General Hsiung K'o-wu's 1st Szechwan Army, 1923

In one of the many local wars of the early 1920s, this soldier of the so-called Southern Forces is fighting against Wu Pei-fu's Northern Expeditionary Army in Szechwan province in the autumn of 1923. He is dressed in a typical southern Chinese uniform of light khaki cotton cap, thin cotton tunic and short trousers. As a rudimentary form of identification he has a small piece of cloth bearing his commander's name pinned to the sleeve of his tunic. Soldiers from the southern provinces were the 'poor relations' of the Warlord Period, and typically lacked shoes, stockings or bedding; this man's straw sandals would either have been purchased locally, or he would have made them himself from materials provided by his commander. The straw hat was worn mainly by soldiers from the south, and again would be acquired locally. Equipment was, like everything else, in short supply; this soldier has a single canvas bandolier for what little spare ammunition he carries. He would have considered himself fortunate to have been issued even with this obsolete .45in Winchester-Hotchkiss M1883 rifle.

C: CHIHLI CLIQUE ARMY, 1920–25

C1: Trooper, 2nd Cavalry, 8th Division, 1923

This cavalryman mounted on a Mongolian pony has a padded cotton jacket and trousers worn with a pair of fur-lined boots, and his peaked cap has sewn-in ear flaps. He has been lucky to receive a pair of motoring goggles, as used by several warlord armies to protect the eyes from dust on the march. The orange armband has the Chinese character for his commander's surname, 'Wang', stencilled in black. In the service of the 'Jade Marshal', Wu Pei-fu, General Wang Ju-ch'un commanded the 9,000-strong 8th Division in Hupeh province in 1923. The trooper is armed with a 6.5mm Mannlicher Carcano 91TS carbine, probably imported by Wu Pei-fu as part of a $5.6 million supply shipment negotiated with an Italian arms dealer in 1922. He also has a sword, based on the *ma-tao* sabre of medieval China; these were used at various times during the early 20th century, and special units of Nationalist troops armed with them fought the Japanese in Jehol province as late as 1933. Some cavalry also used the *da-dao* fighting sword, but this longer-bladed weapon was more suitable for slashing at the enemy from horseback.

Hankow, Hupeh province, 1927: Cantonese troops of the NRA, showing their large straw sun hats – these examples are plain varnished, but they often bore painted revolutionary slogans. The left-hand soldier wears his baggy cotton half-trousers loose, while his comrade has tucked his into puttees; both wear black cloth stockings with straw sandals (see photo page 38).

C2: Military courier, 3rd Division, 1924

This boy, aged about 12, is one of those taken out of the officer training school set up by the Chihli Clique leader Wu Pei-fu to help with his army's communications. During the 1924 campaign Wu was desperately short of reliable troops, and took the officer cadets from their academy to release other men for the front line. Although Wu had a reputation as a relatively humane commander this sacrifice of his army's future officers would not have worried him unduly; he was reported at the time to have 30,000 boy soldiers in his army, who were all orphans of soldiers killed in previous battles. The boy is wearing the same grey cotton uniform as his adult comrades and has a leather despatch case to carry his messages. For self-protection he has been given an Italian 10.35mm Glisenti M1889 revolver.

C3: Infantryman, 11th Division, 1922

This soldier is about to leave for the front during the fighting against the Fengtien Army of Chang Tso-lin in 1922; at this stage his grey cotton uniform is still in good condition, but it will soon show wear-and-tear. His infantry-red collar patches indicate, in Roman numerals on his left, his division; his right patch would show his personal details in Chinese characters, such as his number within his unit. This complicated system of identification was occasionally seen, but the exact protocol varied from region to region. His rank of private first class is shown by the stars on the shoulders of his tunic, but again, shortages meant that many soldiers lacked rank insignia. The red armband was described by Edna Lee Booker, a correspondent who saw Wu Pei-fu's troops leaving for the war. The infantryman is well equipped, with a Japanese backpack and other accoutrements including ammunition pouches designed to carry clips for the Japanese Arisaka rifle, although this soldier is in fact armed with the common Mauser M1888 or a local copy. Booker also described the paraphernalia carried by the

troops fastened to their packs; in this case the soldier has a teapot, but others are described as carrying trench picks, shovels, oiled-paper umbrellas, hot water bottles, lanterns and alarm clocks.

C4: Sergeant, 'Big Sword Corps', 1924

This NCO belongs to an elite unit of Wu Pei-fu's army. The 'Big Sword Corps' acted as a bodyguard for their commander and were responsible for keeping order, when necessary beheading officers and men who had failed in their duties. (During the fighting against Chiang Kai-shek's NRA in 1927, Wu had to send this elite corps into battle to try to stem their advance.) As with most soldiers responsible for discipline in Chinese armies, the men of this unit were picked for their stature and strength – the big executioner's sword needed a pretty strong man to wield it efficiently. The rank of *chung-shih* is indicated by the stripe and two stars on the shoulder straps, and he has collar patches in the pink of the military police. The red armband with a central yellow disc is one of several types recorded as being worn by warlord troops at the time. Besides the sword – which was not really intended for combat use – he is armed with a Mauser M1896 automatic pistol with a wooden holster-stock, and he has spare clips in the leather pouches at his waist.

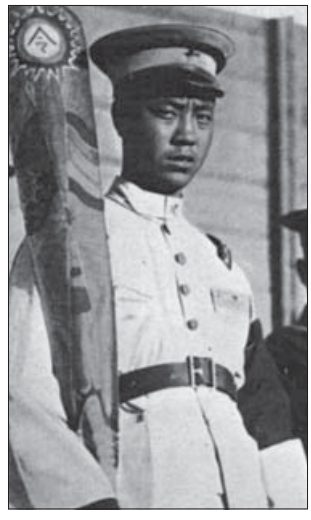
D: KUOMINCHUN ARMY, 1924–28

D1: Private of a 'big sword unit', 1924

The warlord Feng Yu-hsiang formed his first '*da-dao tui*' or 'big sword unit' in 1917, when it was originally called the 'pistol unit'. Hand-picked from among the best available recruits, each man was armed with a rifle, pistol and fighting sword; by the 1920s the rifle had been discarded, and the favoured armament was the *da-dao* and an automatic pistol – usually the Mauser 'broomhandle' or one of its foreign-produced copies. Although they were intended as 'commando'-type assault troops, the fate of these units if sent against a well dug-in enemy would have been fairly grim. This soldier has a grey cotton peaked cap with the five-pointed star badge, and a padded cotton jacket and trousers worn with woollen puttees. Above the left breast pocket he displays a large cloth patch bearing a typical heroic motto; his infantry-red collar patches are plain. His red calico armband has the Chinese character for 'Feng' on the white central disc.

D2: General Feng Yu-hsiang, 1924

The 'Christian Warlord' was one of the more eccentric characters of the period. Here he is dressed in his rough cotton 'farm-boy' uniform; Feng had a habit of changing his clothing to suit the situation, and was reported to change often from full-dress uniform to this very simple, rustic clothing whenever the press corps was about – he cultivated the image of a 'man of the people'. This type of headgear was peculiar to the Kuominchun, and was (oddly) described at the time as a 'bathing cap'. The simple cotton jacket and trousers have no rank or other insignia apart from the blue calico armpatch on his right sleeve; the slogan in black characters across the central white disc reads 'We are sworn to die to save the country, to love the people and not to harm them'. Feng's men often had similar mottos and slogans on patches worn above their breast pockets, usually proclaiming their lord's desire to protect the nation from other, reactionary warlords. Although not armed, Feng wears a Sam Browne belt.



February 1927: this officer of the Ankuochun military police carries a symbolic '*lu-chow*' or 'yellow board' during anti-Communist patrols, symbolizing the bearer's powers of life and death over anyone he and his men deemed a threat. 'Yellow boards' were decorated with symbols of the Republic: here, the Wuchan Uprising flag, above crossed five-barred national flags.

D3: Infantryman, 1925

The uniform worn here was peculiar to the Kuominchun army and was locally produced in Feng Yu-hsiang's own workshops. The straw hat was seen in use by some Kuominchun units, perhaps only for summer campaigning. On the left sleeve he has a blue armband with a central white disc, and the Chinese characters for 'National People's Army'. Note the stick-grenade pouch. From 1925 Feng received most of his weapons from the Soviet Union, but he was not always impressed with those provided. This man is armed with an ex-Imperial Russian Army Winchester M1895 rifle, manufactured in the USA for the Tsar's government in 1917. It was the practice among some of the 'Christian Warlord's' men to carve crosses into the butts of their rifles, and this soldier is reading from the New Testament before going on campaign. Although Feng did hand out copies of the Bible to his men and promoted the reading of scriptures, it is a myth that he baptized soldiers en masse with a hosepipe. They did, however, sing '*Onward Christian Soldiers*' as one of their marching songs; according to an eyewitness, their version was sung with a great deal more menace than the original.

E: FENGTIEN ARMY, 1924–25

E1: Infantryman, 4th Mixed Brigade, winter 1924

General Chang Hai-peng's 4th Mixed Brigade had 3,000 men in six battalions. This soldier's peaked cap is the squatter version characteristic of some northern Chinese troops, especially in Manchuria. He has a grey padded cotton overcoat, stuffed with cotton wadding and quilted with vertical lines of stitching. Underneath this he wears a padded cotton tunic and trousers, and heavy woollen puttees and stockings on his lower legs. Under the overcoat he wears Japanese brown leather equipment with ammunition pouches for his Arisaka Type 30 rifle.

E2: Japanese military advisor, 1924

The warlord Chang Tso-lin employed a number of Japanese military advisors, especially in the technical branches of his army and at his HQ; this artillery captain is in command of a Fengtien field battery during the Second Chihli–Fengtien War. He is wearing a Fengtien Army officer's winter uniform of

An interesting photograph taken in 1929 shows soldiers on the north-west border between China and Inner Mongolia. They wear loose-fitting grey cotton tunics with padded cotton trousers. Their caps are of the standard pattern, but several of them have wide tufts of horsehair added at the back, giving a bizarre appearance. Intriguingly, under magnification one can see that all wear large brass right-facing swastika cap badges. (Swastikas facing in either direction were a universal symbol for good luck in ancient Eastern civilisations for millenia before the right-facing version was adopted by the Nazi Party in Germany.)

a peaked cap, padded overcoat with fur collar, padded cotton tunic and trousers; he probably brought his woollen gloves and leather boots from Japan. On the sleeve of his overcoat he has a red-over-white armband, one of the field signs worn by the Fengtien Army. His weapons are his Japanese Imperial Army company officer's *kyu-gunto* sword, and a Type 26 revolver; the latter had officially been replaced in the Japanese service from 1914, but was used by the Fengtien Army.

E3: Cavalryman, 1st Division, 1925

This cavalry trooper of General Li Ching-lin's 1st Division in Chihli province is wearing winter uniform of a padded grey cotton jacket and trousers, fur-lined cavalry boots, and a fur hat with the five-point enamelled star badge. His other insignia are limited to two armbands which are described in the *China Yearbook* of 1925. That on his left sleeve has a red stripe across a black field, with the Chinese character for 'Li' in the centre. On his right sleeve he has an armband in plain yellow, which was the cavalry branch colour during the Warlord Period; this is probably a substitute for wearing collar patches in the appropriate colour. He is armed with a pre-1912 Chinese Imperial Army sabre slung from a Sam Browne belt, and an elderly Japanese Murata Type 22 (1889) carbine. A single ammunition pouch for the Murata, supplied with the carbine, is slung diagonally to his right hip.

F: CHANG T'SUNG-CHANG'S ARMY, 1927

F1: Bugler, Shantung provincial troops

This uniform is reconstructed from descriptions of the blue uniform worn by Chang's Shantung provincial troops in 1923. The soldier has been issued with the old blue cotton peaked cap and a tunic with infantry-red collar patches, taken from the general's military stores to clothe his expanding army. Although this uniform originally had blue breeches, this man has been issued with padded grey cotton ones instead. His canvas bandoliers are locally produced, but the bugle is Japanese-supplied. He is armed with a British-made ex-Latvian Army Enfield Pattern 14 rifle, as originally supplied to that newly independent Baltic state. Latvia then sold their 6,000 surplus Enfields to a British dealer, Fleming & Co, who sold them on to General Chang. Shipped to China on a German vessel, the SS *Amrum*, they arrived in Chang's arsenals in summer 1927.

F2: White Russian cavalryman

This White Russian émigré, who would normally be mounted on a Mongolian pony, is a mercenary of Chang's bodyguard unit, which was described in detail by an eyewitness. They wore a special uniform of a dark green described as being almost black, with long soft leather boots described as almost yellow in colour. The only insignia worn was the usual five-coloured enamel star cap badge. All the men were extremely well armed, with a Mauser M1896 automatic pistol, a *da-dao* fighting sword slung across the back, and a bamboo lance. Most warlord flags were red; this trooper's pennant has his commander's name on the white band down the hoist.

F3: Infantryman

By 1927 the 'Dog-Meat General' was fighting a losing battle against the advancing National Revolutionary Army; he was desperate for recruits, weapons and equipment, and had to clothe his army in improvised locally produced uniforms. The rather strange-looking headgear worn by this man's unit was based on a traditional peasant hat; made from felt material, these varied in shape. His grey padded cotton uniform and two canvas bandoliers are conventional. His halved blue-and-red armband displays, attached to the centre, a small piece of white cloth with a red line through the centre. A whole regiment of Chang's army were photographed in 1927 wearing this armband, so perhaps this field sign identified the 1st Regiment of a division. The rifle is the Hanyang copy of the German Mauser M1888.

G: ANKUOCHUN TROOPS, 1927

G1: General Sun Ch'uan-fang

The 'Nanking Warlord' is seen commanding his men close to the front line, as joint vice-commander of the Ankuochun or United Northern Warlords army against the advance of the NRA's Northern Expedition. He is wearing the senior officer's field-grey service uniform. The peaked cap bearing three gold stripes, the shoulder straps with three gold stars on a gold braid background, and the two red sidestripes on the breeches all identify general officer's rank. On the left breast of his tunic he displays a selection of the awards he has been presented by the Chinese central government or by other friendly warlords. At the top is the breast badge of the Order of Merit; at bottom left, the grandly named Order of the Precious Brilliant Golden Grain; and bottom right, the Order of the Striped Tiger. Sun was rumoured to be receiving clandestine arms shipments from British sources; here he is armed with his personal .455in Webley & Scott automatic pistol in its holster slung to his shoulder.

G2: Lancer, General Sun Ch'uan-fang's Army

As the Northern Warlords desperately put more and more men into the field in 1927 to try to counter the advances of the National Revolutionary Army, shortage of weapons became an acute problem. This soldier, described in an original photograph caption as an 'Ankuochun Lancer', is a regular of General Sun's army, but has not been lucky enough to be issued with a carbine from Sun's depleted arsenals. Whole units of soldiers armed solely with these primitive homemade spears were seen during the fighting in 1927 – they would presumably have hoped to pick up modern weapons from the battlefield at the earliest opportunity. The uniform is typical winter wear for the northern armies, with a grey cotton peaked cap, overcoat, cotton tunic and trousers. Armbands worn by Sun's troops were dark blue or green, and this plain example lacks any insignia or script. His spear, with its horsehair tassel below the head, would have been made in local workshops.

G3: Boy soldier, General Sun Ch'uan-fang's Army, Kiangsu

At times it was difficult for warlords to recruit willing volunteers, and all armies included men who were not fit to fight as well as young boys. Starvation was often the best recruiting officer, since orphans would have found life in an army preferable to living on the streets; this young soldier of Sun Ch'uan-fang's army is aged about 12 or 13. He has been given a standard military peaked cap with the five-coloured star badge. His padded blue cotton jacket is a civilian item, but his grey padded trousers and puttees are military issue. The canvas bandoliers slung across his chest and round his waist appear to be mostly empty – many soldiers faced a chronic shortage of ammunition. The Japanese-supplied Arisaka Type 30 rifle, with its fixed bayonet, is far too unwieldy for this slightly-built boy to use effectively.

H: NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ARMY, NORTHERN EXPEDITION, 1926–28

H1: Major-General, 2nd Route Army, 1926

As a senior officer of the NRA this major-general wears a well-cut uniform and good-quality equipment privately purchased from tailors and military outfitters in Canton. Only the highest ranking officers in the NRA had rank insignia during the 1926–28 campaign, and a standard system was not introduced until 1929. On the general's left sleeve is the single bar and three-point star of his rank, next to a small KMT sun badge; lieutenant-generals had two gold stars on their rank bar, and full generals three stars. His peaked cap is a superior version of the others ranks' type, and holds its shape better. He has bought himself a Danish-made version of the German-designed Bergmann M1903 automatic pistol; this M1910/21 version with a ten-round magazine was produced in Copenhagen by the Haerens Tojhus Company.

A rear view of a soldier on parade shows a level of equipment that only a few of the warlord armies managed to achieve. The equipment is standard Japanese 1920s issue, which was supplied to the best units of both the Fengtien and Chihli clique armies, and was also acquired in limited amounts by others, including the Yunnan Army of the early 1920s.

H2: NCO standard-bearer, 1927

This soldier wears a light brown-khaki cotton peaked cap with the Nationalist sun badge. His plain tunic has a unit patch above the left breast pocket, but the NCO has no rank insignia; his breeches are made from the same material. The khaki woollen puttees are worn over thick white stockings and leather boots. He has been given the honour of carrying the most important flag of the National Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition – Chiang Kai-shek's personal standard, which was adopted in 1926. It has the Kuomintang sun emblem in the centre, and down the hoist are the characters for 'Commander-in-Chief National Revolutionary Army'; as if to emphasize the point, the pennant above the main flag has the single Chinese character for 'Chief'. The NRA tried to imbue its men with revolutionary spirit by the liberal use of flags bearing the KMT symbol, and even quite small units had their own standard-bearers; these usually carried plain blue flags with a large white central KMT sun emblem.

H3: Infantryman, 4th 'Ironsides' Corps

Most ordinary NRA soldiers wore slight variations on a plain blue or faded blue-grey cotton uniform. This soldier from one of the crack formations wears a standard peaked cap with KMT sun badge, rough cotton tunic and trousers, puttees, stockings and straw sandals. He has been issued with a Swiss-made SIG MP18/I sub-machine gun, a slight modification of the German Bergmann original as used in the Great War. Without the custom-made pouches for the gun's box magazines, he has had to make do with the canvas holdall slung to his hip. In a protective case on his back, attached to his blanket roll, is slung a very widely seen private-purchase item of Chinese soldier's kit – an umbrella, which was often the only shelter from the elements that he had.

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